

THE EDUCATORS'

# ADVOCATE

MAR/APR 2026

Volume 57 | Issue 4

# 2026

SOUTH DAKOTA EDUCATION ASSOCIATION  
**REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY**

**March 27–28**

Drifters Event Center

Fort Pierre, SD

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quick and easy path to update  
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## Vision

We envision valued education professionals providing quality public education for all students.

## Mission

South Dakota Education Association ensures the collective voice for South Dakota public education professionals.

**MAR/APR 2026**

Volume 57 | Issue 4

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### Vice President

Jennifer Milliken

### NEA Director

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# President's Corner

**Stephanie Hageman**

SDEA President

605-224-9263 | [stephanie.hageman@sdea.org](mailto:stephanie.hageman@sdea.org)

## **SDEA STRONG!**

The 101st Legislative Session is in full swing, and I could not be more proud to stand with you—as a member of SDEA, as an advocate for public education, and as part of a community committed to ensuring every student in South Dakota has access to the strong public schools they deserve.

Today, while listening to the House Education Committee debate HB 1217, I was reminded just how powerful we are when we stand together. As proponents of the bill remarked, “The unions lead education policy in this state,” and “People don’t realize how strong the union influence is,” they affirmed what we have always known: when educators unite around a shared purpose, our voice carries weight. Our collective advocacy matters. It shapes conversations. It influences outcomes. And most importantly, it protects and strengthens public education for our students.

Each of you should take immense pride in the role you play in shaping public education across South Dakota. The strength and quality of our schools are not accidental. They are the result of dedicated professionals who show up every day—not only for their students, but for one another—who speak up, engage, and stand firm in defense of what’s right.

I have had the privilege of watching our SDEA staff in action, and I am truly

inspired by their leadership. Their tireless commitment ensures that the voices of our members are heard clearly and consistently. We are in exceptional hands. And just as importantly, SDEA’s work is guided by you. Each year, delegates adopt a Legislative Agenda at the SDEA Representative Assembly, and that member-driven document directs our advocacy throughout the session. It ensures we are fighting for the working conditions you deserve and the learning environments your students need to thrive.

While session is not yet halfway complete, we know there are still challenges ahead. Governor Rhoden initially proposed a 0% increase in education funding, later revising his recommendation to 1% due to higher-than-anticipated revenue projections. We will continue working with legislators to advocate for at least the statutory funding increase our schools require. Our students deserve stability, and our educators deserve meaningful investment.

Now more than ever, your leadership matters. I encourage you to consider taking the next step in your journey by contacting your local association president and applying to serve as a delegate to the SDEA Representative Assembly, March 27–28. The SDEA-RA is the legislative and policy-making body of our Association. As a delegate, you

— *Continued to page 12*



# A Word from Our NEA Director

**Kelsey Lovseth**

NEA Director

kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com

## Red Across America:

### Celebrating Reading, Community, and Public Education



Across the country, educators and members are coming together for **Red Across America**, a celebration that blends the joy of reading with solidarity for

These moments remind us that reading is not just a skill—it's a gateway to connection, curiosity, and understanding.



As part of Read Across America, National Education Association offers year-round resources, book recommendations, and ideas for hosting Read-Ins that bring communities together around books. Whether it's a classroom read-along, a school-wide literacy event, or simply sharing a favorite story, every effort helps cultivate a love of reading.

public education. Timed alongside **Read Across America**, this effort highlights the powerful role educators play in building lifelong readers and strong communities—while proudly wearing red to show unity and support for our profession.

Red Across America encourages educators, students, and families to make reading a shared, joyful experience.

Classrooms, schools, and communities are hosting read-alouds, Read-Ins, book discussions, and literacy activities that center diverse voices and stories.



<https://bit.ly/4atKPZ2>

My students and I went on a *Reading Tour of the World* by reading famous children's books from all over the globe. My favorite: *The Witness Trees: Historic Moments and the Trees Who Watched Them Happen*. Ryan Van Cleave (2023- ISBN 1638191255)

# 2026 SDEA Representative Assembly at Drifters Event Center

**Friday, March 27**

**7:00 pm Registration Opens**

**8:45 pm 1st Business Session**

- Posting of Colors
- Pledge of Allegiance
- Introductions
- Adoption of Rules of Order
- Adoption of the Agenda
- Treasurer's Report
- Preliminary Credentials Report
- State of the Association: Stephanie Hageman, SDEA President
- NEA Fund for Children & Public Education

**10:30 pm Recess**

- Reception

**Deadline for Submitting NBIs at SDEA RA**

The deadline for submitting NBIs (new business items) for the 2026 SDEA RA is March 23 at noon CST. The form for submitting NBIs can be found here <https://www.sdea.org/resource-library/sdea-representative-assembly>. NBIs should be submitted to SDEA President Stephanie Hageman at [Stephanie.Hageman@sdea.org](mailto:Stephanie.Hageman@sdea.org).



**SDEA RA Documents**

**Saturday, March 28**

**7:30 am Registration Opens**

**8:15 am Presentation of the SDEA**

- Budget & Hearing

**9:30 am 2nd Business Session**

- Report of the Executive Director: Ryan Rolfs
- Report of the NEA Director: Kelsey Lovseth
- Report of Committees
  - SDEA RA Committee
  - Awards and Scholarships Committee
- Keynote Speaker

**10:30 am Registration Closes**

- Bylaw Amendments

**11:30 am Lunch**

- Acknowledgement of Honored Guests
  - Friend of Education
  - ESP of the Year Award
  - Teacher of Excellence
  - Early Career Educator Award

**1:30 pm Final Credentials Report**

- New Business Items
- 2027 Legislative Agenda

**Sine Die Adjournment**



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# 2026 SDEA Election

## Candidate Statements

### Executive Office Positions

#### President



#### **Stephanie Hageman**

I am running for President of the SDEA because I believe in the power of public education and the collective voice of educators. Throughout

my 28-year career in public education, I have advocated for students, supported fellow educators, and strengthened our profession through service and collaboration.

#### Vice President



#### **Jennifer Milliken**

I have over 25 years of experience as an educator and have served in multiple leadership roles within our district. For the past three years, I have

been the President of the Stanley County Education Association, following 15 years as Secretary. I have worked collaboratively to foster strong, productive relationships with district leadership and board members.

I have been selected to serve on numerous district committees, including the Safety Committee, Building Leadership Committee, and Literacy Committee, reflecting a high level of trust in my leadership and professional judgment.

I have also participated in negotiations for more than a decade, serving as Head Negotiator for the past three years.

I am widely regarded as a trusted resource

for staff across the district and am committed to advocating effectively for all employees. It would be an honor to extend that advocacy at the state level on behalf of all members.

#### NEA Director

#### **Robert Dahlenburg**

*(no statement provided)*

### Board of Directors

#### Eastern Prairie (2-year term)



#### **Kayla Sylvester**

I've been a teacher and member since 2017, with experience in various positions in small and large districts, currently in Sioux Falls. I've worked

with SDEA on leading social justice trainings from work with NEA. I am passionate about both education advocacy and government, which is more important than ever.



#### **Tim Eckart**

I am Chair of the Eastern Prairie Unit, and SDEA Board of Director member for Eastern Prairie. I would appreciate your vote to continue that service

and representation for the members of the Eastern Prairie Unit as a member of the SDEA Board of Directors.

# 2026 SDEA Election

## Candidate Statements — *continued*

### **Plains** (2-year term)



#### **Jeremy Schultz**

I'm Jeremy Schultz, a 14-year educator and President of the McLaughlin Education Association. I'm seeking to represent the Plains unit on

the SDEA Board. I focus on advocating for educators, prioritizing student needs, and community engagement, aiming to strengthen our collective educational voice while upholding SDEA's mission and vision.



#### **Kim Doherty**

My name is Kim Doherty, and I teach in Stanley County. I am currently a Plains Board member. I would be honored to once again be your voice for the Plains Unit

as we move our association forward and strengthen our collective voice for all things that matter in education.



#### **Mary Mitchell**

I am running for the Plains Board of Directors because I'm committed to serving educators and strengthening SDEA. The NEA Women and Minority Leadership

Conference inspired me. I am prepared to step into leadership, collaborate with others, advocate for equity, and contribute thoughtful, dedicated service that helps our association thrive.

### **SEE** (2-year term)

*no candidate*

### **Western** (2-year term)



#### **Ann Anderson**

My name is Ann Anderson from Belle Fourche, SD and I am committed to supporting educators. With a collaborative mindset and practical

experience, I will work to represent member voices, promote thoughtful policies, and help our association lead positive, sustainable changes for students and educators.

### **EGL** (2-year term)



#### **Olivia Forman**

Throughout my 11 years of teaching, I have served as president and treasurer of my local. I've also represented EGL on the Board for the past

four years. I've seen the power of having a collective voice and would welcome the opportunity to continue serving and advocating for public education!

## NEA Representative Assembly

### **Western Delegate**

#### **Jennifer Macziewski**

Advocating for educators and public education is one of my passions. I would like to contribute to the advocacy at NEA by attending the NEA RA. I intend to represent the Western Unit members with integrity and pride.

## **Robert Dahlenburg**

*(no statement provided)*

## **Heather Harmon**

Serving at NEA RA entails dedication to our education profession. Showing up to listen, observe, and use my voice for you and our students is a priority for me. As a repeat representative, I can dig even deeper each year and continue serving on internal committees that make a difference.

## **Curtis Anderson**

I want to stay involved in SDEA, and NEA I feel attending the NEA RA is a way to stay actively involved in the two unions. With what I have been experiencing in my own personal life I feel I am able to give a hands on take on many social issues. That I feel hundreds of our SDEA teachers and students are actively involved in by no choice of their own.

## **Eastern Prairie Delegate**

### **Lisa Jennings**

I have had the privilege of representing SDEA members at the NEA RA. To be part of the democratic process that moves NEA forward is a great responsibility and one that I do not take lightly. I appreciate your confidence in me as I continue to serve.

### **Tim Eckart**

I am the local president for the Sioux Falls Education Association and chair for the Eastern Prairie Unit. It is my hope to represent South Dakota at the NEA RA and to be your voice at the NEA Representative Assembly.

## **EGL Delegate**

### **Emily Meyer**

I am running for the 2026 NEA Assembly to advocate for strong public education, amplify the needs of educators and students, and contribute to meaningful National policy discussions. I will emphasize

our state's perspective and collaborate with colleagues to ensure decisions reflect the realities of South Dakota classrooms and communities

## **Plains Delegate**

### **Kathy Olsen**

I have been an educator for 30 years serving as local president and being active in the Plains UniServ. I have a belief and passion for this organization and what it can do for members. I would be honored to serve South Dakota as your voice at the NEA/RA.

### **Shawn Olsen**

I would be honored to serve you members of South Dakota as your voice at the NEA/RA. I have served SDEA in different positions through the years. Your vote would give me the opportunity to take this knowledge and experience to the national level to benefit all our members.

### **Jeremy Schultz**

I'm eager to represent you at the 2026 NEA Representative Assembly, advocating for your beliefs and voicing concerns. With four years as an active SDEA member and current McLaughlin Education Association president, I aim to bring valuable insights back to South Dakota, supporting students and educators on a national level.

## **Ethnic Minority At-Large Delegate**

*(Statements listed above)*

### **Heather Harmon**

### **Curtis Anderson**

## **At-Large Delegate**

### **Kayla Sylvester**

I've been a teacher and member since 2017, with experience in small districts and I'm currently in Sioux Falls. I've worked with NEA and SDEA through Leaders for Just Schools and serve on the SFEA Executive

# 2026 SDEA Election

## Candidate Statements — *continued*

Committee. I am articulate, passionate and outspoken about education, social justice, and politics.

*(Statements listed above)*

**Emily Meyer**

**Lisa Jennings**

**Tim Eckart**

**Kathy Olsen**

**Shawn Olsen**

**Jeremy Schultz**

**Curtis Anderson**

**Heather Harmon**

**Robert Dahlenburg**

All of the SDEA Board of Directors and NEA RA delegate races are uncontested except for the Board of Directors race in the Plains unit. The SDEA Board of Directors voted at its January 2026 board meeting to send ballots to only the Plains unit and only for the respective contested race. This means that all other units and races will not receive ballots and the candidates of the uncontested races are automatically declared winners. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact SDEA Elections Committee Chair Tess Canet, [tlcanet69@gmail.com](mailto:tlcanet69@gmail.com), or Elections Committee Liaison Brooke Quinlivan, [brooke.quinlivan@sdea.org](mailto:brooke.quinlivan@sdea.org).

# SDEA/NEA OPPORTUNITIES

## GRANT, SCHOLARSHIPS, CAREER

### SDEA/NEA EDUCATIONAL INNOVATION GRANT

#### SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant

The SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant Program provides grants to members in support of innovative educational and student-oriented projects. The grant program funds new member-led projects. It does not fund projects on an on-going basis. The SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grants give preference to proposals that address student achievement, cultural diversity issues, include community partnerships, and can be duplicated by others.

**Deadline:** *May 1*

### SDEA/NEA EARLY CAREER EDUCATOR AWARD

#### SDEA/NEA Early Career Educator Award

An individual member or a local may nominate an early career educator for this award. Each governance unit may select an Early Career Educator of the Year from nominations submitted in their unit. All the unit winners will be candidates for the statewide award, which will be announced at the Representative Assembly in Fort Pierre.

**Deadline:** *December 1*

**For more information on all grants and awards offered by SDEA, visit [SDEA.org](http://SDEA.org).**

# 2026 SDEA RA

## Proposed Bylaw Changes

### **Bylaw Proposal – Administrators Eligible for Membership but Exempt from Legal Services; Local cannot have input**

#### **Article IV. Membership**

**SECTION 1. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP.** Any person actively engaged in educational service of a professional nature, or on a limited leave of absence, in a public school district, university, or other public institution devoted primarily to education is eligible to become an active member of the Association if such person: (a) has a bachelor's or higher degree or holds a regular vocational or technical certificate and (b) where required, holds or is eligible to hold a regular certificate of any kind except an emergency substandard certificate.

Where Association membership is available through an affiliated local association, no Association membership shall be available without membership in that local association. A person who is eligible for membership in that local cannot apply for membership in another local association. No person may hold active membership in the Association who does not also hold membership in an affiliated local association, where available, and in the National Education Association.

An active member shall have full membership services and privileges, including voting, holding office, and serving as a delegate in an affiliated local association and the Association, except where prohibited. These services and privileges will continue so long as the member has no past dues obligations.

Active membership in the Association shall be continuous but may be terminated at any time by the member by written resignation

to the local association president or state president. If the written resignation is received prior to September 15, the member's dues obligation shall cease; otherwise, the member shall be obligated to maintain his/her dues obligation for the remainder of the membership year. Active membership may also be terminated at the discretion of the state president and the executive director; or by the board of directors for (a) nonpayment of membership dues, (b) failure to meet membership requirements, or (c) denial or revocation of membership pursuant to Article IV, Section 9.

**SECTION 10. ELIGIBILITY: PROVISIONS AND LIMITATIONS.** Membership, as provided in other sections of this article, shall be open to persons who agree to subscribe to the goals and objectives of the Association and to abide by its bylaws.

Members engaged in teaching or other education work shall adhere to the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession as adopted by the Association.

~~Any administrator whose primary duties include advising the school board or Board of Regents in the bargaining process or making final recommendations to the employing body on the employment of personnel shall be denied active membership, if such denial is requested by the governing body of an affiliated local association in the school district or higher education institution in question.~~

A member is subject to censure, or denial, suspension, or revocation of membership in the Association by action of the board of directors for conduct inconsistent with the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, or for just cause. Prior to any disciplinary action, however, any

member must be served either by mail or in person with written specific charges outlining in sufficient detail the nature of the charges against the member so that the member may prepare an adequate defense if the member wishes. Prior to any final disciplinary action being taken, the member shall be entitled to at least thirty (30) days' notice of hearing before the board of directors. At such a hearing before the board, the issue of appropriate discipline, if any, shall be determined. The member shall be accorded all appropriate due process rights at said hearing including the right to be represented by counsel of the member's choice. The member is entitled to a written decision from the board of directors setting forth the decision of the board and the specific findings of the board upon which the decision is based.

The accused member(s) shall have the right to appeal to the Association under their due

process rights. The board of directors shall have the power to reinstate any suspended or expelled member.

Any member being provided services under Member Rights shall be eligible to maintain their previous membership status and retain all rights and privileges thereof by the payment of appropriate dues.

The Association shall not deny membership to any person on the basis of race, creed, national origin, or sex.

**Policy Changes Required:** Member Rights Policy 9.1 and 9.2 will be changed to reflect that administrators are no longer entitled to legal services as part of their rights of membership.

**PROPOSAL RATIONALE:**

Submitted by: Bylaw Committee

Bylaw Committee Position: Do Pass

Board Position: Do Pass

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— Continued from page 4

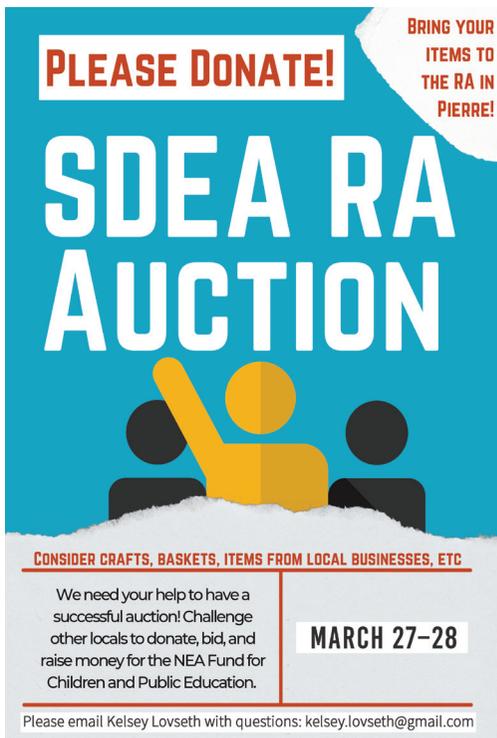
do more than attend a meeting, you help shape the direction of SDEA.

As our Executive Director, Ryan Rolfs, recently stated, "SDEA is founded, funded, and governed by educators. Educators deserve fair treatment, they deserve a voice in their profession, and they deserve equal protections under the law."

Those words reflect not only what we stand for—but who we are.

Together, we are strong. Together, we are influential. And together, we will continue to lead—for our profession and for the students who depend on us every single day.

*Stephanie Abgeman*



BRING YOUR ITEMS TO THE RA IN PIERRE!

**PLEASE DONATE!**

**SDEA RA AUCTION**

CONSIDER CRAFTS, BASKETS, ITEMS FROM LOCAL BUSINESSES, ETC

We need your help to have a successful auction! Challenge other locals to donate, bid, and raise money for the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education.

**MARCH 27-28**

Please email Kelsey Lovseth with questions: [kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com](mailto:kelsey.lovseth@gmail.com)

# 2026 SDEA RA

## Proposed 2026 2027 Legislative Agenda

### ENSURING EDUCATOR AND CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

#### SDEA/NEA supports:

- Sufficient funding provided by the state and other sources to ensure that buildings are secure, structurally and environmentally safe and meet 21st century instructional needs.
- A drug-free, tobacco-free, and weapon-free learning environment.
- Funding based on current costs, not averages, for serving those with disabilities (ages birth-21)
- The requirement that school districts provide safe and well-regulated transportation or reimbursement to parents/guardians for transportation of students to and from public school.
- A learning environment free from intimidation, bullying, harassment, and violence.
- A learning environment with access to certified counselors, social workers, mental health professionals, and appropriate medical and nutritional personnel.
- Access to statewide resources focused on meeting the needs of the whole child, including mental, emotional and behavioral needs.
- Equipping education professionals with the skills to recognize the mental, emotional and behavioral needs of the whole child, and the ability to connect their students with the appropriate resources to address those needs.
- A learning environment free from discrimination based on disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity,

race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.

- SDEA supports funding or programs that empower schools and communities to collaborate in providing critical social services to students and their families who are economically challenged.
- Policies that foster collaboration between communities, school boards, administration and staff in the development of a pandemic preparedness or any other crisis plan.
- Ensure educators are working in buildings which are structurally sound and free from pollutants that may jeopardize their health.

### PREPARING STUDENTS FOR JOBS OF THE FUTURE

#### SDEA/NEA supports:

- Broad-based curriculum and research-based standards supported by a complement of services that prepare students for life-long learning.
- The implementation of career and technical preparation programs that position students for jobs of the future.
- State funding for post-secondary scholarships across a broad spectrum of student abilities and needs.
- Development of a comprehensive plan to determine individual student growth.
- Legislation that provides for an environment that allows for the free exchange of ideas.

### STRENGTHENING PUBLIC EDUCATION

#### SDEA/NEA supports:

- Providing school districts, parents, educators and students with the

# Proposed 2026 2027 Legislative Agenda — *continued*

resources and support necessary to ensure an equitable education regardless of disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, geographic location or socioeconomic status.

- Providing adequate state funding to South Dakota preK-12 public schools so that South Dakota's school districts can offer competitive salaries and benefits for school employees and can provide students with 21st century opportunities to learn.
- Providing adequate state funding so that South Dakota's post-secondary public institutions can attract and retain high quality faculty, and that will make post-secondary education, including technical, undergraduate and graduate education, affordable for South Dakota students.
- Through existing resources, SDEA/NEA will work with state legislators to ensure that the state's funding formula for k-12 education meets the needs of all school districts in South Dakota and allows all districts to grant meaningful salary and benefit increases to teachers and education support professionals.
- Legislation requiring school district accountability measures for state aid funding.
- Taxpayer dollars that are directed to public schools which are held accountable, address a specific need, are transparent, and allow for innovation without jeopardizing the promise of the state funding formula, i.e., SDEA does not support charter schools or voucher programs.
- The use of accreditation standards by the State Board of Education in the school accreditation process.
- Efforts to have appropriately certified and endorsed educators in all positions.
- The limitation on the amount of money school districts can maintain or carry over in their fund balances.
- A long-term solution, which includes a balanced tax structure, to fund public education in South Dakota.
- School terms that include student contact days and/or hours, professional development/curriculum days and family conferences.
- The rejection of any taxation plans that adversely affect education funding.
- A full-time all-day kindergarten program.
- Sufficient funding for the programs and resources needed to address the change in compulsory attendance.
- Legislation promoting enhanced teacher quality through instructional leadership, rigorous and responsive teacher preparation programs, quality mentoring and sound professional development programs that support South Dakota professional teacher standards.
- Sufficient time, funding, and resources to provide professional development to address changes required by the implementation of state/federally mandated initiatives.
- Efforts to expand Early Childhood Education programs.
- Efforts to ensure all Kindergarten students are at least five years old at the start of the school year.
- Student assessments that inform instruction and improve student learning. Such assessments should provide for multiple measures of

learning, including measures that assess higher order thinking skills.

- SDEA supports measures to enhance English language learner programs that provide the necessary tools and resources to give all students access to an equitable education.
- SDEA supports legislation and policies that allows for true academic freedom which ensures that students and faculty are allowed the free exchange of ideas without interference from the State.
- Public schools, and their staff and families, receive the resources to ensure all students have access to the tools, technology and internet required for learning.
- SDEA supports legislation and policies that preserve educators' professional judgment in and prevent censorship of content in classroom and school libraries.

## **RESPECTING EDUCATION EMPLOYEES**

### **SDEA/NEA supports:**

- Increasing the salaries and or compensation of all education employees to the regional average or above.
- Legislation that provides necessary funding for school districts to fund health benefits for public school employees.
- Efforts to strengthen collective bargaining rights and to achieve greater equity at the bargaining table (i.e. binding arbitration.)
- Legislation that would require rationale be given on decisions by the South Dakota Department of Labor regarding bargaining issues.
- Efforts and legislation to maintain and/or increase the South Dakota Retirement System benefit factor and/or to protect the SDRS Pension Trust Fund sustainability while removing the cola

maximum. These efforts shall include, but not be limited to, building a coalition including all organized employee groups covered under SDRS.

- Legislation that ensures that there are collectively bargained salaries and incentives to attract and retain quality educators.
- Legislation that supports enhanced compensation systems that are locally bargained, based on multiple measures, resulting in improved instruction and/or effectiveness and encouraging teacher collaboration, not competition or merit pay.
- Providing a negotiated per diem increase in pay for all school employees if there is an increase in the school term.
- Legislation that would increase wages and benefits for all education support professionals.
- The representation of all levels of instruction in the planning/development and implementation of educational policy.
- Maintaining continuing contract provisions in the law.
- A work environment free from intimidation, bullying, harassment and violence.
- A work environment free from discrimination based on age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and socioeconomic status.
- Efforts that acknowledge and support the mental health needs of education professionals.
- Respecting school and educator autonomy.
- Support due process protections for all educational professionals.



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Jason Freeman



As much as we may want it to be, life just isn't perfect and it can be a tremendous struggle

trying to figure out how to deal with all of its imperfections. Jason Freeman is a professional speaker, author, and podcaster who makes his living using the very same voice and speech impediment that he spent nearly thirty years of his life trying to hide, proving that sometimes our most awkward obstacles can become our most awesome gifts. He talks about the power of doing our Imperfect Best, a concept for sustainable

progress born out of his years struggling with perfectionism that helps users create informed and intuitive ways around their obstacles.

While Jason has never been a teacher, he was definitely a challenging student at times for many of his teachers. He can only imagine the frustrations, uncertainty, drama and other assorted imperfections that teachers have to navigate on a daily basis and he tips his proverbial hat to you.

Jason has given a TEDx Talk, has a Master of Fine Arts In Poetry—which he wants you to know, isn't quite as lucrative as you might think—and has eaten enough monster cookies to give Cookie Monster a run for his money.



**Interested in presenting at Summer Academy?**

We're seeking educators to share their expertise, best practices, and innovative ideas. Submit your session proposal using the RFP form: [bit.ly/4km1p1S](https://bit.ly/4km1p1S)



**Summer Academy registration is open!**

Join educators from across districts for practical, relevant PD you can actually use.

**Register here:** [bit.ly/3NVvd9l](https://bit.ly/3NVvd9l)

# Honored Women Educators of South Dakota

The purpose of HWE of South Dakota is to recognize outstanding South Dakota women educators and to promise better relationships among women engaged in educational work.

## Honored Women Educators of South Dakota Nominee

Because it can be difficult to get all necessary information on the nominee, while not divulging the fact that the person is being nominated, a new format was voted on in August 2017. The new format is to submit the information that can be obtained, with **items listed below required**. Submit the information by **May 15, 2026** to: Amanda Sonne, 421 West 12th Avenue, Mitchell, SD 57301. Nominations can be submitted electronically to: [amanda.sonne@k12.sd.us](mailto:amanda.sonne@k12.sd.us)

Then the nominee will be notified and will be asked to complete the form by **May 29, 2026**. Those selected for membership in Honored Women Educators of South Dakota will be notified and will be invited to the 2026 luncheon.

### Each SDEA Member may submit one nominee per year.

Requirements of nominees:

1. Be active in education at present and be a present SDEA member. Or, if retired, the nominee must have been an SDEA member during her active career
2. Have a minimum of four years of college
3. Should have spent at least ten years in the field of education
4. Be fully qualified educationally for their field of work
5. Have made major contributions in the area of education
6. Should be active in the community and exhibit character traits worthy of the honor of membership
7. Eligible for membership are classroom teachers, administrators, librarians, supervisors, and former educators

### Submit the following information on a word document.

1. Full name of nominee
2. Mailing address of nominee
3. Phone number of nominee
4. Email address of nominee
5. Present position of nominee, if currently teaching; past position, if retired
6. Write a paragraph that reveals the personality and real worth of the nominee
7. Name, signature, addresses, phone number of nominator who submits the nomination, and date
8. Submit 2 or 3 letters of recommendation from others who are familiar with the contributions of the nominee. Possible choices could be co-workers, administrators, students or former students, or parents of present or former students. If the nominator does not submit the letters of recommendation, the nominee will be asked to do so.

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# Social Media Guidance for Educators

## Social Media Guidance for Educators

Social media platforms change quickly. Always follow your district's policies on social media use and professional boundaries.

### Protect Your Online Presence

- Use strong privacy settings, but remember nothing online is truly private or anonymous.
- Assume anything you post could become public and permanent.
- Remember there is no such thing as a truly anonymous post.

### Know Your Responsibilities

- Follow district policies at all times.
- Remember your mandatory reporter obligations.
- Off-duty conduct can still result in discipline.

### Avoid Risky Behavior

- Don't friend students or parents on personal accounts.
- Don't post student photos without permission.
- Avoid posting criticism, complaints, or angry responses about work.
- Never post offensive, profane, sexual, or questionable content.
- Don't post anything you wouldn't want on the front page of the local paper.

**When in doubt, pause before posting.  
Professional judgment matters.**

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## Honored Women Educators of South Dakota Book Award

The \$500 Book Award is for a female student majoring in the field of education who is in the second semester of her junior year. The award is based on financial need.

### Requirements:

- Minimum of 2.5 GPA on a 4.0 scale
- Attach a copy of most recent transcript
- Attach a list of two (2) contact persons if follow-up reference should be needed.
- Write an essay of not less than 250 words on "How I Feel I will Make a

Difference in the Field of Education"  
(Attach to this application)

Deadline date for application, including transcript, personal contacts, and essay is  
**May 15, 2026.**

### Submit the information to:

Amanda Sonne  
421 West 12th Ave., Mitchell, SD 57301  
amanda.sonne@k12.sd.us

**Applications for  
both Awards**  
<https://bit.ly/4rLB1Sl>





It's hard to believe that another school year is drawing to a close. This year's SDEA-Retired Annual meeting is earlier than usual due to Easter. I hope to see you in person at Perkins in Fort Pierre at 2:00 CT on Friday, March 27. If you are unable to attend in person but would like to participate from home, please contact LouAnn Jensen at 605-220-1688 or email [louann.jensen@sdea.org](mailto:louann.jensen@sdea.org) for a Zoom link. If you attend both the Retired Annual meeting and stay for the SDEA representative assembly on Saturday, March 28, you can receive a \$75 stipend to offset your travel and room expenses.

I would like to encourage everyone to make sure their voter registration is up to date and to vote. Vote in the primaries, in the November elections, and in all of the local elections. Talk to your legislators, school board members, and local government officials. Your voice is important.

SDEA will again be offering the Summer Leadership Academy at Augustana University in Sioux Falls on July 19–21. Participants who live more than 50 miles from the event are eligible for hotel reimbursement of up to \$82.50 for each night of the conference. Reimbursement is limited to a maximum of \$165.00 total. You may book a hotel at a location of your choice. A block of rooms has been reserved at Holiday Inn Sioux Falls-City Center. You can call the hotel at 605-339-2000. Be sure to book under the SDEA Summer Academy block. SDEA will reimburse mileage at a rate of \$0.25 a mile. More information can be found in this edition of *The Advocate*.

I hope to see you at the Annual Meeting, Representative Assembly, and Summer Leadership.

Mary Jane Chiles  
SDEA Retired President

### ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

SDEA Retired Staff Liaison:  
LouAnn Jensen | 605-220-1688  
[LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org](mailto:LouAnn.Jensen@sdea.org)



**Join SDEA  
Retired Now**  
[bit.ly/3WNRNGA](https://bit.ly/3WNRNGA)

## Local Treasurer's Training

- Responsibilities as an Association Officer
- Reporting Association Income and Expenses
- Important Tax Topics

Contact Holly Frederick at [holly.frederick@sdea.org](mailto:holly.frederick@sdea.org) to set up your training date!

411 East Capitol Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501

605-224-9263  
sdea.org



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## March

26-27 SDEA BOD Meeting

27-28 **SDEA Representative Assembly**

## April

27-28 President's Spring Meeting

## May

1 SDEA/NEA Educational Innovation Grant application deadline

4-8 Teacher Appreciation Week

5 National Teacher Day

12 Western Unit meeting